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WORKERS' LIVING STANDARDS IMPROVE

The Bulgarian People's Republic has eliminated one of the workers' greatest threats, unemployment, although hidden unemployment still exists in some rural areas. The number of workers in production industries is constantly increasing; in 1948 it increased by 41,000 over 1947, and by 150,000 compared to 1946. In the second quarter of 1949, the number of gainfully employed persons was 29.6 percent higher than during the same period in 1948. The wage fund in 1948 was 30 percent higher than in 1947. The Five-Year Plan provides for a 60-percent increase of the wage fund.

The supply of consumers' goods has been increased as follows in proportion to 1945: cotton fabrics five times, woolen fabrics 13, footwear 35; knitwear, almost three times; fats, more than four times; sugar three times, etc. In spite of these increases, some shortages are still acute. This is mostly due to increased demand and higher purchasing power of the working classes.

Workers' and employees' canteens number 2,475, and they are serving meals to 305,000 persons, compared to 1,200 canteens in 1945 serving 109,000 persons.

All rural and city workers are covered by social security insurance. Their number comprises 3,100,000, of which 2,500,000 are agricultural workers. Present labor laws have been extended to agricultural and mine workers. Mother and child care is receiving greater attention from year to year and is extended to industrial, office, and agricultural workers.

About 3,100,000 are sharing the benefits of free medical care, compared to 300,000 prior to 9 September 1944. The number of hospital beds has increased 28 percent, hospital wards 135 percent, and hospitals 15 percent. Health care has been extended to the rural areas, where about 200 new medical centers have been established, including 1,440 subdivisions (maternity clinics, nurseries, dental clinics, pharmacies, etc.). The number of socialized dental clinics has grown from 56 to 498.

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Expenditures for workers' summer vacation facilities have been increased from 124 million levas in 1944 to 1,326 million in 1948. Only 1,000 workers received free summer vacations in 1945, 50,000 in 1948, and 65,000 in 1949. Five million levas were spent for children's summer camps in 1945, 139 million levas in 1947.

Important progress has been achieved by the Fatherland Front in culture and education. Training has been made available to all classes of the population, supported by financial aid and other facilities. Reforms are being introduced in all phases of the educational system in order to establish a scientific, progressive, and efficient system. The number of elementary schools has grown from 5,120 in 1943 - 1944 to 6,029 in 1948 - 1949; the number of children not attending elementary schools has decreased from 12,962 to 3,172. The number of high schools has increased from 134 to 232, the number of teachers' institutes from one to 14, universities from one to 3, and university students from 18,000 to 45,000.

Prior to 9 September 1944 there were no night schools where workers could improve their education without work interruption. Now 31 evening high schools have enrolled 4,226 students, 46 secondary evening schools have 2,258 students, and 75 elementary night schools have 2,634 students.

Preschool education is also receiving great attention. There were 292 kindergartens prior to 9 September 1944, while in 1948 - 1949 there are 1,040 in cities and 2,493 in rural areas.

Educational facilities are also extended to the Turkish population of the country; there are 807 schools conducted in the Turkish language. A Turkish high school, a teachers' institute, and one religious seminary have been opened. The state universities are open to Turks; and a large number of Turkish students have enrolled.

Creative arts and talents are also sponsored; scientists, writers, and artists can pursue their work freely. Cultural clubs, choirs, and theatrical groups are numerous, and physical education is constantly developing.

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